

Season's greetings from Pakistan!

Unlike Germany, the cold winter weather has not arrived in the lower elevations where we are located. The sun continues shining and the temperatures remain moderate. Although the temperatures have become colder in the mountains, the snow level has not hampered our ability to deliver humanitarian aid to remote villages. As of today, we have delivered almost 7 million tons of food, blankets and tents. Additionally, we have been carrying external loads (slingloads) of corrugated steel that is used as roofing material for shelters. The hard work and dedication of TF Eagle Soldiers throughout the relief mission has been truly impressive.

Although it is difficult to be away from family and friends during the holidays, the morale of TF Eagle Soldiers remains high. The Christmas spirit began shortly after Thanksgiving. Soldiers placed colorful decorations and lights around their living tents, the dining facility, and the internet café trailer. During the week before Christmas, we enjoyed a festive tree lighting ceremony where we gathered to sing carols and enjoy eggnog, sparkling cider, and cookies. Soldiers were able to take a variety of presents, including books, candy, and hygiene items, that were placed underneath the tree.

During this holiday season, TF Eagle hosted several VIP visits. Our first visitor was Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, whose 45-minute visit gave Soldiers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet a high-ranking cabinet official. Our next visitors were GEN Schoomaker, the Army Chief of Staff, and several Congressmen. During his visit, GEN Schoomaker reenlisted SPC Markus Dawson, HHC, 4BDE, and showed his appreciation by giving a coin to each TF Eagle Soldier. Our final visitor was LTG Helmly, Commanding General, Army Reserve Command, who spent a generous amount of time speaking with our Reserve and National Guard Servicemembers. Each VIP made the effort to interact with Soldiers, pose for photos, and tour our facilities.

TF Eagle's holiday good fortune continued when we were able to redeploy seven 4BDE Soldiers on 23 Dec. Everyone arrived safely in Germany before Christmas. Additionally, our video teleconferences proved successful thanks to the coordinating efforts of our communications personnel. Families from Germany, Fort Hood, Fort Carson, and Fort Leavenworth were able to see and speak with their deployed Soldier.

Soldiers celebrated Christmas with cheer. Between Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, we received approximately 2,000 pounds of mail. This delivery alone boosted morale tremendously as Soldiers enjoyed opening their cards and care packages. On Christmas Eve, TF Eagle sponsored a local bizarre where Soldiers could treat themselves to last-minute Christmas gifts or simply window shop. TF Eagle cooks provided the highlight event on Christmas Day. They prepared a delicious meal consisting of traditional favorites such as turkey, roast beef, gravy, mash potatoes, yams, green bean casserole, stuffing, cranberry sauce, and an assortment of pies. Chaplain (MAJ) Hollowell lead two well-attended church services. We certainly felt the Christmas spirit despite being miles away from family, friends, and the comforts of home.

On 26 Dec, the Aussies celebrated Boxing Day, which is similar to our Christmas. The day included a cricket match between TF Eagle, consisting of 7 Aussies and 4 American Soldiers, and 11 members of the Pakistani Aviation unit stationed at Qasim Airbase. The crowd was filled

with cheering spectators, including several dignitaries from all three countries. Spectators supported their team by waving their country's flags and heckling the opponents whenever appropriate. A Pakistani fife and drum quartet entertained us during breaks in the action. Although exciting moments filled the match, TF Eagle emerged victorious. The Aussies then hosted a "down-under" barbeque with steaks, prawns, crab legs, salads, and a variety of desserts. Boxing Day helped to build a stronger connection between TF Eagle and our host nation.

Thanks for your continued support. May you and your family be blessed with good health and prosperity throughout the holidays and into the new year.

Respectfully,

COL Bob Johnson